

# Legal Protection Fund Advances Immigration Protections for Chicago Residents

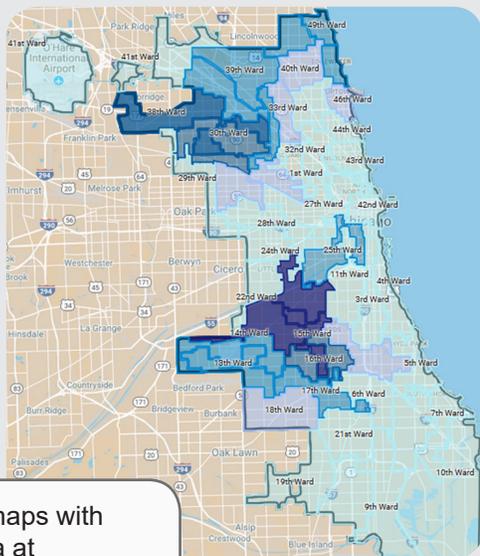
The City of Chicago launched the Legal Protection Fund in January 2017 to help Chicago's immigrant residents and their families defend against the expected onslaught of immigration enforcement actions by the Trump administration. The Fund, part of the City of Chicago's One Chicago campaign, provides legal consultations, representation, and information sessions to help immigrants understand their rights and stay apprised of changing policies.

The Fund's participating organizations are on track to surpass their initial goals of providing legal screenings to 1,500 Chicagoans, legal representation in 1,000 cases, and Know Your Rights trainings to 20,000 people in the first year.

From January through December 2017:

**1,992**  
Chicagoans  
obtained free  
legal screenings  
and representa-  
tion in **1003**  
cases

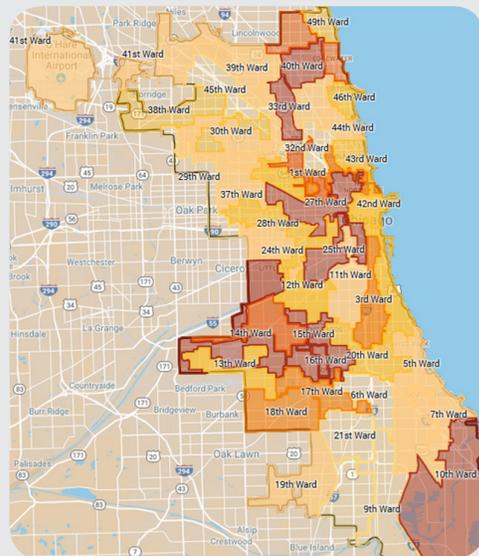
(Darker shading  
indicates wards  
with more  
residents  
receiving  
services.)



View interactive maps with  
ward-specific data at  
[immigrantjustice.org/LPFreport](http://immigrantjustice.org/LPFreport)

**24,255**  
Chicagoans  
attended free  
immigration  
Know Your  
Rights sessions

(Darker shading  
indicates wards  
with more  
sessions)



The National Immigrant Justice Center provided consultations to 110% more Chicago residents and opened 90% more Chicago cases than in the same period in 2016.

## Legal Protection Fund participating organizations:

**Heartland Alliance's National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC)** provides legal screenings and representation. **The Resurrection Project (TRP)** leads the Fund's Community Navigator Program, which provides residents support and counseling on strategies to protect their families and obtain legal status.

**Community Navigators:** Centro de Trabajadores Unidos, Centro Romero, Erie Neighborhood House, Hana Center, Indo-American Center, Instituto del Progreso Latino, National Partnership for New Americans, Southwest Organizing Project, and United African Organization.

**Pro bono supporters:** Baker McKenzie LLP, Bryan Cave, Chicago Volunteer Legal Services, DLA Piper, Exelon, JP Morgan Chase & Co., Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Mayer Brown LLP, Sidley Austin LLP



# Ongoing need for immigration services

Since the Fund's launch, the Trump administration has issued executive orders and memos and implemented practices that increased immigrant arrests by 40 percent more than during the previous year. These actions spread fear and anxiety in communities across the country. In September, the administration canceled the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, putting thousands of Chicagoans at risk of deportation in the coming years as their DACA protection expires.

## Chicagoans are being targeted.

**About 180,000 Chicago residents do not have immigration status, and more than 50,000 Chicago households include a family member who is undocumented.**

Plainclothes U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers are a common presence in some neighborhoods. Two **South Side** residents were **placed in deportation proceedings** after they offered assistance to officers they believed were Chicago police looking for gang members. The officers asked the residents about their immigration status and then revealed they were ICE agents. Another resident was stopped by an ICE officer for allegedly running a stop sign, and then taken into immigration custody. The Fund's Community Navigators connected these residents with NIJC, which now represents them in immigration court.

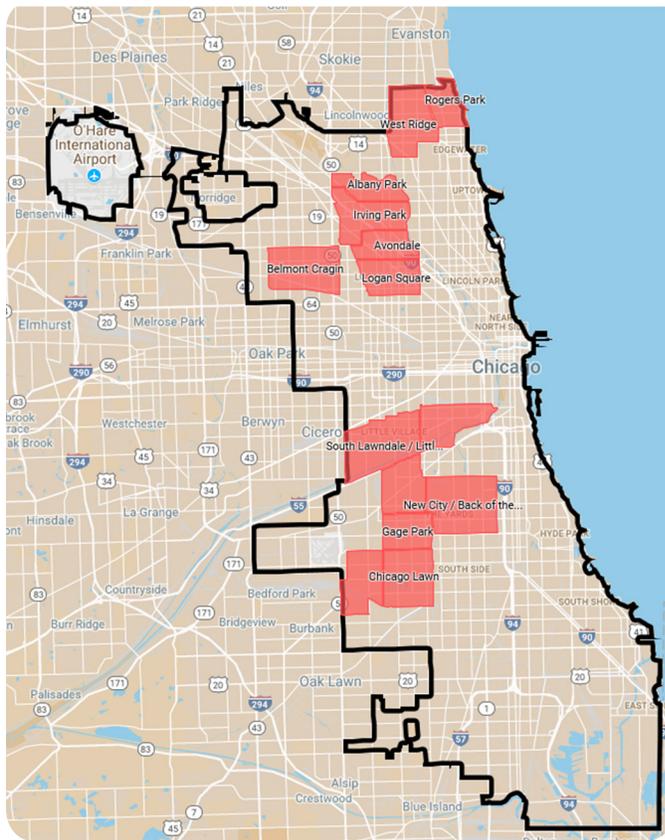
## Having a lawyer matters.

**Immigrants who have lawyers are nearly 5 times more likely to win their cases than those without lawyers.\* The immigration system does not offer appointed counsel to immigrants facing deportation.**

Access to local legal services is critical for elderly residents and families whose mobility is limited by work or other concerns. As ICE enforcement increases, many residents do not feel comfortable leaving their neighborhoods. In these circumstances, families seek any help they can find near home, and in many cases fall prey to fraudulent immigration law practitioners.

**As the stories in this report illustrate, the Fund has expanded access to quality immigration services for some of Chicago's most underserved communities.**

## Neighborhoods with highest numbers of undocumented residents



*Data on Chicago's undocumented population is from Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and Rob Paral & Associates, 2014.*

**View an interactive map at [immigrantjustice.org/LPFreport](http://immigrantjustice.org/LPFreport)**

## ★ Free legal screenings and representation

**Northwest Chicago:** Since January, NIJC has provided weekly immigration legal screenings in the Belmont-Cragin neighborhood. Heartland Human Care Services, a social services agency with a longstanding presence in the community, hosts the screenings. Home to Chicago's most rapidly growing immigrant community, Belmont-Cragin's residents had not had access to immigration services near home. By the end of September, these weekly consultations reached hundreds of Northwest Chicago residents.

Fabiola\* came to NIJC's **Belmont-Cragin** office for a free legal screening after two other Chicago legal aid organizations were unable to assist her. **A domestic violence survivor, Fabiola could not afford legal services to help her apply for a green card. NIJC attorneys now represent her in obtaining lawful permanent residence and, one day, citizenship.** "I'm very grateful that I found lawyers who could help me extend my visa and work authorization. It was difficult to find help and I knew that I could be deported if my papers expired," Fabiola said. "Now I feel secure and I have hope."

**South Side:** The Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) hosts NIJC legal screenings (bimonthly in the summer and monthly in the fall and winter), expanding access to immigration services for families on the South Side. NIJC has provided free case representation for more than 50 Chicago residents through the partnership.

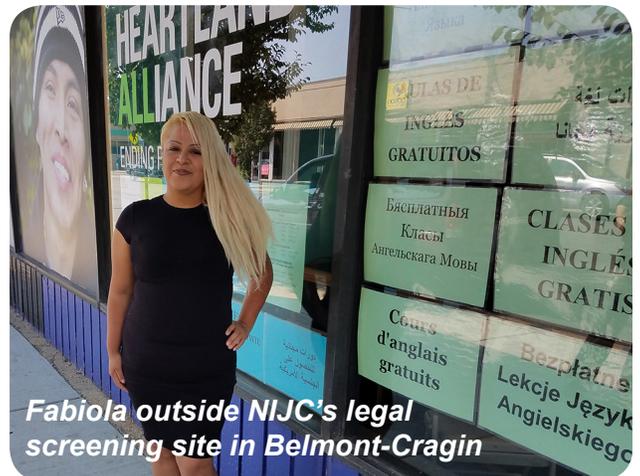
**West Lawn** resident Esperanza\* was ready to begin the process of applying for U.S. citizenship but could not afford to pay for legal assistance in addition to the \$725 government filing fees. Other legal aid providers were unable to waive their fees to help her. **After a legal screening at SWOP, NIJC represented Esperanza to apply for citizenship.**

**The Loop:** The Fund allowed NIJC to significantly expand its capacity to provide services in the Loop.

Among those seeking services at NIJC's main office were **individuals and families who fled to the United States after Hurricane Matthew wrought havoc on Haiti's economy and security.** While a form of legal relief called Temporary Protected Status (TPS) has allowed them to rebuild their lives in Chicago, the future of the program is uncertain under the Trump administration. Esther\*, a **Rogers Park** resident who has family in the United States and hopes to attend nursing school, came to NIJC's Loop office to renew her TPS status and discuss her options if the program is eliminated. A **Washington Heights** family faced hundreds of dollars in filing fees to renew their TPS status, and could not afford to pay more for legal assistance. Through the Fund, they completed their applications with the help of trained legal professionals, and will have access to NIJC as a resource if the administration cancels TPS.

**Edgewater** resident Michal\* came to the United States in 2004. In Poland he was a psychologist, but **in the United States he became the primary caretaker for his mother**, who is 82 years old and suffers from heart and advanced joint disease. Now a U.S. citizen, Michal's mother petitioned for her son to get his green card. When it was time for him to begin the process, the Polish American Association referred him to NIJC.

*\*Name changed to protect individual's privacy.*



## ★ Support and accompaniment

The Fund's Community Navigator Program provides training to affiliated organizations, who recruit members to serve as Community Navigators and link undocumented individuals and lawful permanent residents to service providers such as community-based organizations, faith networks, law school legal clinics, mental health providers, consulates, organized labor, and legal services providers (including NIJC).

Romalda, a **Lower West Side** mother of three U.S. citizen children and survivor of domestic violence, relied heavily on support from TRP Community Navigators. **The navigators accompanied Romalda to a Chicago Police precinct to obtain the documentation and certification she needed to support her application for a U visa, a form of protection for crime victims.** TRP then referred Romalda's case to NIJC, where a *pro bono* attorney will represent her.

Because of the Fund, the Hana Center, another Community Navigator, reached new members of Chicago's **North Side** Asian community. For example, a Mongolian Community Navigator who works at a nail salon provided Know Your Rights information to other nail technicians, and also connected them with legal screenings and assistance for citizenship applications. **One Mongolian couple who had lawful permanent residence decided to apply for citizenship after participating in a Know Your Rights presentation.** They now look forward to participating in the next U.S. election and helping to make the country better for immigrants.

## ★ Know Your Rights trainings

Collaboration with aldermen, churches, City Colleges of Chicago, and Chicago Public Schools have further extended the Fund's reach.

The Peterson Pulaski Business & Industrial Council and 39th Ward Alderman Margaret Laurino asked an NIJC attorney to present a Know Your Rights session at the **North Park** community's annual luncheon. "She was sensitive in her **advice to businesses who wished to provide guidance and consolation to their valued employees** at a time of great distress and fear," said Council Executive Director Janita Tucker. "Her disarming and fact-based presentation was very well received by an audience ranging from bankers to manufacturers."

Students at Benito Juarez Community Academy in **Pilsen** worried about how the new administration's tough stance on immigration could affect their families, friends, and themselves. Principal Juan Carlos Ocon called on 25th Ward Alderman Daniel Solis and TRP to bring resources directly to the school. Through the Fund, **hundreds of students have received Know Your Rights trainings and dozens have been referred to NIJC for legal consultation and representation.** "On more than one occasion, my students stopped their and their parents' deportations because they knew not to open the door," said Principal Ocon. "This partnership is vital to the wellbeing and protection of Chicago Public Schools students."



*Community Navigators and a Fund attorney rallied to support a Chicago resident at his ICE check-in*



*NIJC Know Your Rights session for Albany Park business owners*